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### **Local High School Student Experiences Marine Science Firsthand at Woods Hole Science Aquarium in Massachusetts**

They came from diverse educational and family backgrounds and from states across the nation. For Joe Donohoe of Salt Lake City, Utah, one of 11 high school and college students who spent the summer working or volunteering at the Woods Hole Science Aquarium (WHSA) on Cape Cod, Mass., 2008 was a summer to remember.

Donohoe, a junior at West High School, was kept busy feeding fish, training harbor seals, cleaning tanks, leading shore-side collecting trips for the public, and helping children and adults learn about marine animals at the Aquarium's touch tanks. All were part of his daily routine. He also attended presentations about marine science careers, went on field trips, and learned a lot about marine science.

"This experience really clarified for me what options I have and has given me many ideas about what I could do with a degree in marine biology," he said of the program. "I was very interested in marine science before, but now I have a much better idea what is involved. I met a lot of interesting people in Woods Hole, and realize there are a lot of career possibilities. And it was fun!"

The WHSA, the nation's oldest public research display aquarium, offers two summer programs for students who have completed grade 10 or higher, a five-week internship and a two-week career seminar in late July. Both programs are run by the WHSA staff, and are projects of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, which operates the Aquarium and is part of NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service, and the neighboring private, non-profit Marine Biological Laboratory.

Donohoe participated in the two-week Careers in Marine Science Seminar July 21 to August 1, along with four other high school students from California, New York and Massachusetts. Several seminar students, including Donohoe, stayed on as interns for an additional 1-2 weeks to help with animal husbandry and to serve as junior naturalists on collecting walks.

Although he lives far from the ocean, Donohoe says that living in "a dry state" has only fueled his interest in marine science and marine life, which began when he was

in grade school. He admits he has been very lucky to have visited several of the major aquariums in the U.S., and in previous summers has studied oceanography and marine biology in Hawaii as well as chemistry and biology in the Chesapeake Bay. Last summer he worked with a professor at the University of Utah who studies toxins in marine gastropods, or snails, with potential medical applications.

This summer he headed east to the village of Woods Hole, one of the centers of marine scientific research in the world, in the Town of Falmouth, Mass. on Cape Cod to try something different. As a career seminar student he received training in marine animal husbandry and basic aquarist chores, heard presentations from scientists working in a variety of marine fields, went on collecting trips, visited other Woods Hole science institutions, and went on field trips to New Bedford, a major fishing port, and Nantucket.

The seminar is designed to give students an idea of what people working in Woods Hole do and how different areas of science contribute to the larger effort to understand the marine world and to manage marine resources wisely.

The annual program also provides students with the opportunity to work with a professional staff caring for a collection of about 140 species of fish and invertebrates common to the continental shelf from Maine to North Carolina, two harbor seals named LuSeal and Bumper, and sometimes sea turtles held for rehabilitation and eventual release.

Donohoe enjoyed the “behind-the-scenes” aquarium experience, being outside on collecting trips and visits to other organizations during his stay in Woods Hole. He says he has learned about many aspects of marine animals, marine science research and conservation, and possible careers.

The group was kept busy during the day, and enjoyed many activities together at night and on weekends, from playing soccer and seeing the latest Batman film at the local theater to a bonfire on the beach. They even spent a “Night at the Aquarium,” eating pizza, playing games and sleeping on the conference room floor. “And I got to see bioluminescence for the first time when we went swimming one night. It was so cool.”

Once back at West High School in a few weeks, Donohoe will return to a demanding course load and participating on the school’s baseball and golf teams. He has played piano for ten years, and enjoys skiing with friends whenever he can.

As for the future? He plans to attend college and then graduate school, probably in marine science. And his thoughts on the summer of 2008: “I learned new things and had a blast. What is better than that?”

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